



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-03281

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Metal Theft

Request and Answer:

Question

Earlier this week I submitted the below FOI request asking for details about metal theft during 2011-12. I have since been contacted by quite a few police forces who have said that it is not possible to retrieve the information over that time period, and have suggested I narrow the scope.

For that reason I would like to submit a new request for the same data but limited to the week of September 1st to 8th 2011. So please disregard the old request. The new request therefore reads as follows:

Under the Freedom of Information Act I would like to request the following:

In the week of September 1st to 8th 2011 how many incidents of metal theft were there in your police force area?

In the response please include an itemised list of every recorded offence, stating in each case the following:

a) date of offence b) location of offence c) estimated value of stolen items d) whether anyone was charged e) whether there was a conviction.

For each conviction please state the punishment that was given, i.e. £500 fine, 18-month community punishment order, 12 months jail sentence.

Answer

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to:

- disclose information in response to your request pursuant to the provisions of Section 31 of the Act.

Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland,

when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 31(1)(a)(b)(c)– Law Enforcement is a prejudice based, qualified exemption, this means that it is the public authority’s responsibility to evidence the Harm and carry out a Public Interest Test.

A summary of the Harm along with the Public Interest Test are provided below:

Harm

Retrieval of the information has produced data relating to a short time-frame of one week. Disclosing the dates of the incidents along with the locations could assist criminals to identify those areas where such offences have previously occurred and likely identify any undetected crimes, therefore encouraging further crime in those areas. Such criminal activity would likely prejudice the prevention or detection of crime and ultimately the apprehension of offenders, therefore hindering the law enforcement role of Police.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Release

There is a public interest in this particular type of crime and the public would be better informed about criminal activity in their area.

Factors Favouring Retention

Disclosing the dates along with the locations where metal thefts have occurred could highlight undetected crimes and encourage criminals to commit further crime in those areas. This could hinder the law enforcement role of police in the prevention and detection of crime.

Decision

Although the public are interested and concerned about the crimes committed in their local areas the disclosure of this information would likely encourage further crime. Criminals could easily identify if their crimes have remained undetected and encourage them to commit further crime in those areas. The law enforcement role of police could be undermined as the prevention or detection of crime would likely be prejudiced by this disclosure.

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act, duty to assist, I can advise you that there were 52 offences recorded where the property stolen was metal in the period September 1st – 8th 2011 and a total of four charges made.

The figures provided below include the offences of burglary, robbery and theft where the property was classified as ‘stolen’ and where the property description includes ‘metal’ for the period September 1st – 8th 2011.

Please note: These figures are based on information taken from a live crime recording system and will be subject to change.

Policing Area	Estimated value
East Belfast	200
East Belfast	200

East Belfast	200
East Belfast	200
North Belfast	No Value specified
Lisburn	30
South Belfast	100
Foyle	No Value specified
North Belfast	No Value specified
North Down	No Value specified
East Belfast	1
Magherafelt	450
Fermanagh	200
Newry & Mourne	300
Carrickfergus	250
Cookstown	15,000
Newtownards	200
Armagh	80
Newtownabbey	200
Limavady	1,000
Craigavon	500
East Belfast	1
Larne	2,000
Foyle	4,000
North Belfast	No Value specified
Magherafelt	150
Magherafelt	200
Antrim	130
Coleraine	100
East Belfast	50
Moyle	No Value specified
Castlereagh	100
Newry & Mourne	480
South Belfast	200
East Belfast	500
Cookstown	No Value specified
Ballymena	100
West Belfast	180
Armagh	300
Carrickfergus	200
Banbridge	No Value specified
Fermanagh	No Value specified

Foyle	No Value specified
Foyle	No Value specified
Ballymena	1,437
North Belfast	No Value specified
South Belfast	400
Dungannon & South Tyrone	300
Foyle	No Value specified
Newtownabbey	200
Fermanagh	400
Foyle	200

Source: PSNI Statistics

PSNI do not hold information in relation to convictions and the subsequent sentence received. The NI Court Service may be able to assist with this part of your request. NI Court Service website can be accessed via the link provided below:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/pages/default.aspx>

Due to evidence of the offence of metal theft being linked to serious organised crime across the UK, the Police Service of Northern Ireland can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any other information relevant to your request by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 23(5) Information relating to the Security bodies;

Section 23 is an absolute class-based exemption and therefore there is no requirement to conduct a harm or public interest test.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.